

## **Business Wire**

### **Texas Supreme Court Justice Deborah Hankinson Lauded For Contributions to Legal Services to the Poor**

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AUSTIN, Texas--Oct. 11, 2002--The Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation, the largest Texas-based funding source for legal aid organizations in the state, has awarded Justice Deborah Hankinson the prestigious Harold F. Kleinman award for outstanding contributions to the delivery of civil legal services to the poor.

Hankinson, the Supreme Court of Texas liaison to the Foundation, has worked tirelessly to ensure that poor and low-income Texans are afforded access to justice. She led the charge in the creation of the Texas Access to Justice Commission, an umbrella organization designed to enhance the quality of legal services to the poor. She was a strong supporter of the recent change to the State Bar of Texas dues statement that requires attorneys to "opt-out" of making a contribution to legal services. Through the opt-out approach, Texas attorneys contributed \$1 million this year, doubling 2001 contributions. Additionally, Hankinson was instrumental in securing \$5 million in Crime Victim Compensation funds, dedicated to the provision of civil legal services for low-income crime victims.

"In this time in which access to justice for underprivileged Texans has suffered from Congressional retreat, litigation assault and a decline in statewide funds, Justice Hankinson has been a source of innovative ideas and inspirational leadership," TEAJF Board Chairman Dick Tate said. "Her dedicated efforts have improved the lives of countless poor Texans by opening for them the doors of our justice system. She is the Harold Kleinman Award personified."

The Kleinman Award is named after former Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation Chairman Harold F. Kleinman. The Foundation, wishing to recognize Kleinman's outstanding character, commitment and public service to the people of Texas, created the award to confer prestige and honor upon leaders in the field of access to civil justice.

"Deborah Hankinson has brought to the issue of civil legal services to the poor the same passion she brings to her role as judge," Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas R. Phillips said. "She works from a formidable personal and intellectual commitment that we can and should do better to make the justice system accessible to all."

The Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation presented the Kleinman Award to

Hankinson at its annual Court Luncheon. Upon acceptance of the award, Hankinson said, "This award means so much to me. Harold Kleinman was the managing partner at (the law firm of) Thompson & Knight when I began working there. All the associates admired him tremendously. He was the example of professionalism, community service and compassion."

Hankinson, a native of Dallas, graduated cum laude with her doctorate in jurisprudence from Southern Methodist University School of Law. She was appointed to the Supreme Court of Texas in 1997, and was elected to the court in 1998. She will step down from the court in December 2002.

The Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation ([www.txiolta.org](http://www.txiolta.org)) administers funds to create community capacity to provide civil legal services for low-income Texans. The organization is committed to the vision that all Texans will have equal access to justice, regardless of their income. The Foundation administers the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) fund, the Basic Civil Legal Services (BCLS) fund and the Crime Victims Civil Legal Services (CVCLS) fund. The funds from each of these sources are earmarked to assist nonprofit organizations in providing free civil legal services to low-income